



THE

CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

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March 1988

Published By The
Weston Historical Society

THE EDITOR'S EDGE

Our two main articles in this issue remind us that 'the good old days' were not always that good. Many diseases that people died of in bygone days are now known by other names and in many cases are preventable and/or curable. A hundred years (or less) from now better cures or preventable medicines will make present medicines seem like the good old days.

Snow and blizzards are another thing. Mother Nature can and has stopped the best of man's machines. Maybe for not as long as in the past, but until we can make snow vaporize before our eyes, it will be a traveling hazzard; from here to the corner, or to wherever you want to go — and can't get there.

Historical Societies can gather dust and become stagnant if they don't open their doors and let the sunshine and people in — often. We plan to do the latter and our schedule of special events is a great start. We will also be open on a regular basis, to be announced later when the schedule is set.

Herb Day - Editor

WESTON'S HISTORICAL NOTEBOOK THE GREAT BLIZZARD — RIGHT HERE IN WESTON!!

Well, it was all over the East coast, from the Washington area up to Maine. And it probably was not the most snow this area received in one snow storm, but it was close to being a record. However, what made it such a fierce storm were the winds and the resulting massive drifts, some as high as 20 feet. The total actual accumulation was between three and four feet, but was hard to measure because of the continual drifting. It was truly a blizzard! But you don't have to take my word for it, (I wasn't there) because we have eye-witness accounts from several newspapers in Fairfield County and comments from the Weston 'outlivers', given to us by their descendents.

We do not have any photographs of Weston during the great blizzard but I guess you would expect this since most photographs in those days were taken by professional photographers and they probably could not get to Weston for a few weeks with their equipment. If there are any pictures, they have not surfaced yet.

The following comments start with the newspaper stories of what things were like in surrounding towns, then several comments by Weston's own, including excerpts from a journal.

Bridgeport Standard Bridgeport 3/14/88.

'Everybody is of the same opinion today: they never saw such a storm in all their lives and they meant it too. Bakery, brewery and milk wagons had the right-of-way. Dr. Ward, President of Yankton College, Dakota said, while stranded in Bridgeport, "It only needed more cold on it to equal the genuine Dakota article."

Bridgeport 3/16/88.

None of the roads were broken thru until yesterday (four days after the storm.)

The oldest residents can not recollect such a fearful, storm as we have just passed through.

It is called a Dakota blizzard. If this is the way she is knocking at Uncle Sam's door to be admitted (to the union), do let her in. (on Jan. 16, 1888 a severe storm raged in Dakota, temperatures dropped to 30° below and 100 people lost their lives).

Norwalk Gazette Wed. Mar. 14, 1888

'Lean' Sherwood was found in the snow by the police nearly frozen to death last Monday night. He was taken to Wendling's bake shop where Dutch George packed him in a barrel of snow to take the frost out and rolled the barrel and all into his oven to take the snow out. Lean came out alright. Stage driver Gregory of the Weston stage route had an experience in get-

PICTURE QUIZ

CAN YOU NAME THIS?



If you can name the item in the picture, send your answer and your name to:

The Editor
The Chronicle Quarterly
P.O. Box 1092
Weston, CT 06883

The item in the last picture quiz is an apple grinder. It was placed over a cider press, the apples were placed in the grinder, and ground-up apples were dropped down into the cider press. There is a recent addition to the Barn Museum (1987).

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CURRENT EVENTS 1988 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The majority of the Coley House redecorating project was finished in December, 1987 in preparation for 'A Christmas at the Coley House', which was a three day open house to show off the great work that the Women's clubs of Weston accomplished in redecorating the first floor of this house. We hope many of you were able to attend. With these redecorated rooms available for use, we are able to schedule some activities for the rest of the year:

March 10th thru March 13th. A TOY AND DOLL EXHIBIT. We will use the theme of "THINGS OF CHILDHOOD" covering two periods. The first period will be the late 1800's and the second period will be from 1900-1940. We will use items which already belong to the Society and also items lent to us by friends and members of the Society. This event will have taken place by the time that the Chronicle is printed.

April 21. On this Thursday in April, the Society will host a luncheon and tour for the Norfield Women's Fellowship.

April 24. In April, which is our membership drive and dues month, we will hold a Wine and Cheese party for all members and their guests. This event will take place at the Coley House and on the grounds of the Homestead, weather permitting. We hope to encourage every member to bring in a new member that month and thereby try to double our membership and get much needed financial support as well as new workers to help accomplish all that needs to be done to be a viable and visible organization, dedicated to 'Preserving the Past for the Benefit of the Future'. This Wine and Cheese party will be on Sunday, April 24 from 4 to 6 pm.

May. Your Society will play host to the Newcomer's Club with a bus tour of Weston, a picnic and a tour of the Coley Homestead.

July. The date has not been set yet, but we will again be hosts to the Senior Citizens of Weston with a cookout, and a tour of the homestead and perhaps some outdoor demonstrations and exhibits.

Fall. A Quilt show and sale is planned with food being served for sale, as well as opportunities to tour the House and Barn. The Quilts will be old as well as new, and hopefully, a demonstration of Quilting.

December. We are planning our second annual 'Christmas at the Coley House', similar to the successful one this past December.

A letter to all members was sent out last month outlining these tentative plans with a tear-sheet listing the help we so vitally need. If your response is not yet in, please take the time to do it now or call one of the Trustees. WE DO NEED EVERYONE TO HELP IN SOME WAY.

THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEES FOR 1988

Lou Bregy
Herb Day
Marie Golden
Linda Guidera
Ethel Keene
Evelyn Kerin
Linda Martin
Gene O'Hare

MaryLou Perry
Gary Samuelson
Dan Sanders
Peggy Sanford
Marge Schneider
Joe Spetly
Nadine Tichy

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN "THE OUTLIVERS"



The charming video starring Christopher Plummer and many of your friends and neighbors is still available at the Town Hall. A light hearted, but accurate view of Weston's history. 30 minutes — \$30. Don't miss this keepsake of the Bicentennial Year.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The following letter came in to the Editor in response to the last issue of the Chronicle.

1. In your December Chronicle you had the Norfield corners. On the one corner where there wasn't a house you said the land was probably owned by the Banks family. That land was owned by Charles Broch. Florence Banks bought the land for her new house in the 40's. (I) Was very interested in seeing the house that was on the corner where Willis Banks built his house, as Willis was my uncle and I had never seen a picture of the house he took down. Liked your article of the Banks 50th anniversary, as they were my grandparents and I remember the party. I am Natalie, one of the grandchildren that attended. Rita and I live here in Killingworth and Anna lives in Branford. I enjoy the Chronicle so very much. Although I moved away from Weston 47 years ago, it holds a dear place in my memory.
Natalie Corsa Endean

The other letters, which were comments on the projections on the future of Weston made by one of our anonymous contributors, will be printed in the next issue, because of lack of room in this issue.

OLD TIME DISEASES

From church records contributed by Rodney Merwin as recorded by pastors of the Trinity Church of Southport and the Greenfield Hill Congregational Church.

| | | | |
|------|---|------|---|
| 1786 | Hannah Dascomb, old age Hannah Bangs, a child with worm The wife of James Knapp, putrid fever Hezekiah Bulkley, consumption | | Sally Hinman, camp distemper, 18 months old Charity Burr, dysentery, 28 Rebecca Burr, dysentery, 30; sisters Philo Burr, dysentery, 13 |
| 1790 | Jonathan Bulkley, gout in the stomach Olive Kirtland, nervous fever Capt. Peter Whitney, black jaundice | 1795 | Wife of David Jinnings, 40 years, suddenly Wife of Jonathan Coley, aged 77, old age Anna, wife to Peter Bulkley, numb palsy Anna, wife to William Nichols, in childbed Joseph Beers, gravel, 83 years old Obediah Whelar, scarlet fever, aged 7 years Abigail Whelar, dropsy, 61 years Polly, wife to Lazarus Beach, in childbed, 35 years |
| 1792 | Capt. Hezekiah Sturges, apoplectic fit John Sherwood, consumption Widow Margaret Lacy, dropsey Adria Allen, an infant, bladder in the throat Ned, a Negro, dropsy | | Rowland Roberts, an infant, whooping cough Shelton Edwards, murdered, 15 years old Mary Mills, 55 years, slow fever |
| 1793 | Abigail Sherwood, small pox Increase Burr, wenn in the throat | 1796 | Susannah Burr, 4 years, dropsy in the head |
| 1794 | David Robertson, scarlet fever Samuel Robertson, lingering complaints William Edward Nichols, an infant, teething | 1794 | Susannah Burr, mother to the above, aged 25, consumption |

POST OFFICE UPDATE

Last Spring, Weston Historical Society, in conjunction with the Town of Weston, had a most successful opening day at the old Weston P.O. and General Store. One of our fund raisers for the restoration project was the sale of the front post office boxes. Now we will be selling the rear boxes. There are 54 slots and instead of putting the donors name on the slots, we will put all 54 names on one large brass plaque on the oak panel out next to the front boxes. The boxes will be sold for \$50 or more on the first come, first served basis. Now, and in the future, all monies generated will go into the Adams-Scribner Museum Fund which will go towards any restoration for the barn and the post office. Since the Historical Society is maintaining the Post Office and the Barn, we are asking all those who wish to buy a rear box to send their donation to Weston Historical Society, P.O. Box 1092, Weston, Ct. 06883. Please make your check out to the Adams-Scribner Museum Fund.

The barn has just been reroofed. Additional work on the foundation and the floor will be done as funds permit.

Both the Adams-Scribner Museum and the Coley Homestead Museum will be open during the summer months. We will announce the days and times in the local papers and in the next Chronicle.

WISH LIST

Every Non-profit organization has a list of things that it needs which are acquired by saving for them, by grants, and by gifts of the items needed. We will be printing our Wish List in the next Chronicle. One item on our list has been obtained. In December we received a \$1000 grant from the IBM Corporation to buy a computer. This was made possible by Mr. Bill Bowles, a V.P. with IBM. (Sylvia Bowles was a Trustee of the Society until they moved to North Carolina). We did buy an IBM computer and some of our workers are now learning how to use this valuable tool for our museum. We will be using it for our membership lists, for cataloging our many items in the museum, and for old house and genealogy records.

CONTRIBUTING TO THIS ISSUE:

Linda Martin
Ruth Lockwood
Rodney Merwin
Ray Fitch
Helen Budd Mason
Dave Coley

DUES ARE DUE

Your 1988 Dues are due now. We appreciate your support. The monies received from members goes to pay for the printing of the Chronicle and to pay for some of the upkeep for the Coley House. Since the costs of both are going up, if you can upgrade your membership one level, we will be forever grateful.

A membership renewal form will be sent to you. If you have a friend who should be a member, please give them the form printed below, or tell them to send their check to us with the level of membership desired. Thank you.

NEW MEMBERS

We take this opportunity to welcome the following new members to the Society:

Mr. & Mrs. Ted White
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Suratt
Mr. & Mrs. Ned Frey
Mr. & Mrs. Horace Shipman of Killingsworth, Ct
Mr. & Mrs. Wray Jones

WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP DUES

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------|----------------------|----------|
| Youth | \$ 2.00 | Sustaining | \$ 50.00 |
| Senior | \$ 5.00 | Contributing . . . | \$100.00 |
| General | \$15.00 | Life | \$500.00 |

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

New membership _____ Renewal _____

Dues are for the period April 1 through March 31.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

OLD PICTURES
PICTURE QUIZ
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MUSEUM HOURS
WESTONS HISTORICAL NOTE BOOK

ting home Monday night which he doesn't care to see again. He was obliged to frequent intervals along the dreary and lonesome road to shovel a pathway for his team through high drifts, in the teeth of the blinding storm and it is a miracle that he survived the strain. On Wall Street (in Norwalk) snow obscured the first floor stores and was up to the second floor windows. The train was stuck and some cars were off the track. Telephone service was disrupted.

Norwalk Gazette Wed. Mar. 21, 1888

"We never had anything like this during 25 years of Republican administration, and it simply shows how utterly incapable the Democrats are to run this country. We must have a change."

Selectman Wheeler, Norwalk

Evening Sentinel — South Norwalk

Mar. 13, 1888 — Mr. Nash, the iceman, who lives near the fair grounds and one of Norwalk's old settlers, said yesterday that the storm reminded him of the storm that took place 34 years ago (1854), when the snow fell continually for ten days.

Mar. 14, 1888 — The mail carrier from Weston drove to Norwalk Monday and has not been able to go back to Weston yet.

Southport 3/16/88 — The packet vessels will not leave until next week as no produce can be put aboard until then (probably because the produce could not be brought to the port).

The Fairfield Advertiser March 28, 1888

It tried to snow a little yesterday, but despite the memory of the blizzard, we failed to get alarmed.

Elbridge C. Jennings of Wilton brought the first New York, New Haven, and Hartford train into the South Norwalk station after the blizzard, on March 15, 1888.

AND IN WESTON —

Helen Mason sent the following:

"My grandmother, Helen Elizabeth Fitch Sturges kept a journal from the time she was married in 1870 until her five children were grown up and until she had a couple of grandchildren — James Coley, my brother Ed, and me. The following excerpts are from her journal. March 11, 1888 — a very unpleasant day, snowing a little and a very high, cold wind blowing . . . raining and snowing in the evening.

March 12, 1888 — Monday — snowing and blowing, and the snow beginning to fill up east of the house. At noon, it was impossible to reach the woodpile, so we had to go into the cellar and get old pieces of a bin to burn. At 2 o'clock John and Sammie started for the red barn, to tend the oxen and calves, but the storm was raging so they had to come back. They managed to reach the cow barn by going around the wash house. All night the wind and storm kept up a continuous howl, and it was very cold.

March 13, 1888 — Tuesday — This morning the thermometer stood at 12 above at 10 a.m. We did not get

up early as we were so short of wood. John and Sammie, by going around the east lot reached the red barn, found the calves standing by the oxen and the four looking as if they were forsaken. They managed to put the oxen in the horse stables and dug a path to the cow barn for the calves. Now all are under cover except three turkeys. It did not storm again till 3 o'clock in the afternoon but the wind did not stop until 8 in the evening. The windows in the one room where we had a fire were so covered with ice and snow we could not see out, and one south door was the only door we could get out and the snow in front of that is five ft. high — something of a step.

March 14, Wednesday. Rose at 8. Wind quiet and not very cold. At nine it commenced snowing and kept it up till 2 in the afternoon, when the sun shone forth in all its glory, but what did we see but heaps of snow piled everywhere it could find someplace to lean against. The roads will have to be dug out. Up until now we have plenty to eat, but will be short of provisions in a few days unless we can get to the station (Cannon). Wednesday night — weather mild.

March 15. Thursday — Sun very bright and warm, but the wind cold. John and Sammie went to the station (C.T. Gregory store and P.O.) No trains running until Monday morning. Snow melting fast, but the chicken yard is full and the banks are so high that if you go up on a snow bank you can easily reach the tops of the highest pear trees. The children think it is great sport.

April 1, Sunday — Easter Sunday. No one to church but Mable (her daughter) from this house. It is a fine day and we would be glad to go but can't walk and I doubt if we could ride if we had a horse — over the banks of snow. Yesterday, Mr. Sterling drove by, the first team that has passed here since March 12. We have a horse in New York that Uncle Fred (Dr. Frederick Dennis Sturges, Helen Mason's great uncle) has bought for us and hope to get him (or it) here this week. How fine to have a horse again.

Yesterday Mr. Sterling got for me from Mr. J. Templeton, South Wilton, a rag carpet that he has been weaving for me. I sewed 51 lbs. rags in two months; it made 27½ yds of carpet. Cost of weaving — \$6.32.

Helen Mason, who sent these excerpts to us, also said 'my father, then 19, remembered that it was extremely cold, the country roads were filled in with snow from fence top to fence top, and a tunnel was shoveled from the house to the barn to feed the cattle and horses, and to the woodshed for firewood'.

Ray Fitch sent us the following: My dad told us that they went out the second story window after the blizzard of 1888. He said that they had to tunnel to get into the barn to take care of the animals. He said that the amount of snow was not so great but that the wind blew it in great drifts. He often said that we had more snow on the level (since) then in the blizzard.

Dave Coley said that during the blizzard of 1934 much

(continued on page 6)

The way Westport was

The great March blizzard of '88

By JOANNA FOSTER
For some Westporters in the early part of this century, spring began on St. Patrick's Day. It was a tradition for the boys in town to take their first swim of the season on that day. "After school," Willard R. Williams remembers, "we would race to the 'rock' and sans bathing suits jump into the ice-cold water; then jump out fast, don our clothes and run home." The 'rock' was a ledge of rock on the west side of Gorham Island.

There was no house on Gorham Island at that time and it was a favorite place to play for the children who lived on or near Main Street. The Downs house that later stood on the island, until the office building was constructed, was moved there from Main Street.

Mr. Williams also recalls that "people always planted a row of potatoes on St. Patrick's Day so they would have fresh potatoes for their Fourth of July picnics and clambakes."

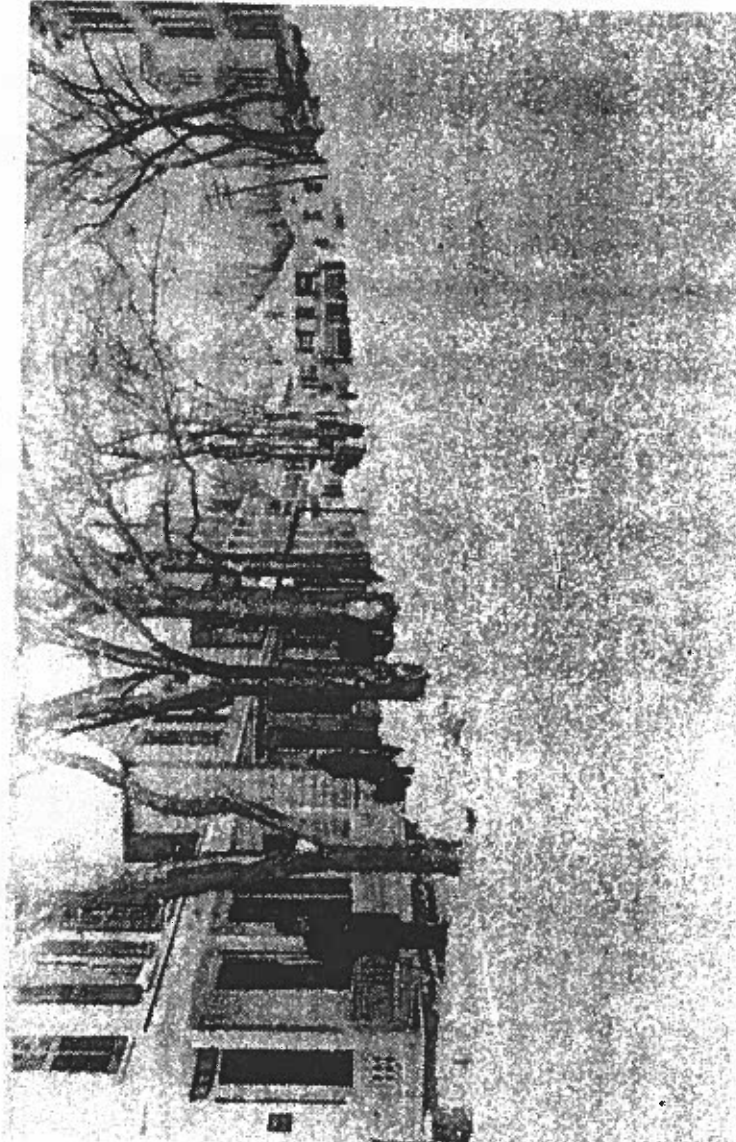
But not every March was warm enough for planting. On March 11, 1888, a blizzard began that paralyzed the East Coast for days. This famous "Blizzard of '88" was recalled some years later by the local paper under the heading "16th Anniversary of Great Bliz-zard." The writer was quick to point out that this storm "wholly eclipsed ... the great

Mills, at eight o'clock Monday morning with two horses and a sleigh, started from the hotel for the depot with 13 passengers ... When near the 'Tilley foundry,' now Kem-per's factory [in 1986 the Marketing Corporation of America building], the sleigh broke down." The passengers struggled to the depot, wading through drifts, only to find there were no trains in either direction and no way to get home! Thirty-six people were stranded at the depot, subsisting on what they could get from a nearby grocery.

Though "George Mills' pony express" had faithfully taken the mail down to the station on Monday, he had nothing to bring back until Friday morning when the first train arrived from New York City. That train, however, could not go beyond Saugatuck because of "the snow blockade at George Hale's crossing." At this cut and at Greens Farms' Gallup Gap, the snow had drifted down onto the tracks and was "as solid as hard earth."

Early Monday, the telegraph lines were blown down, and the first communication the center of Westport had from the outside world was on Wednesday afternoon "when a road breaking party, consisting of some 25 men with five yoke of oxen, with sleds arrived from Greens Farms."

Judge Joseph Adams was 11 at the time and recalled for Betty Shepard, "On Thursday morning my father started out to see my mother's uncles on Cross Highway. The snow was



THE BLIZZARD OF 1888 from Main Street looking south.

Christmas storm of which our grandfathers said so much." The storm had started slowly. In fact, though it had snowed all day Sunday, by 10 p.m. the snow had changed to rain. As people blew out their lights and went to bed, some were grumbling about the mud and slush they would find in the morning. However, "soon after 2 a.m., the wind suddenly veered to N.N. West, developing to a hurricane bringing with it blinding snow,

both continuing without cessation til late Tuesday evening, the mercury falling to zero." In front of the newspaper's office the snow drift was 20 feet high; it was like this all over town. The newspaper's office was then in the large white building that stands at the west end of the Post Road bridge. On the bridge itself "the foot bridge and the railing ... were lifted in a body Monday afternoon and carried

to the south side of the horse car tracks and left upside down in the carriage path, stopping all travel."

Business was entirely suspended, but since nothing should stop the post office, "for the first time since the N.Y. and N.H. railroad was built, the morning mail was carried from the village post office to the station at Saugatuck on horseback, the post rider being George W. Mills ... The veteran stage driver, Joseph

(continued from page 3)

| | | | |
|------|---|------|---|
| | Lois Burr, in childbed sickness, 21 years | | Caroline Blackman, aged 6 years, hiccough |
| | Ebenezer Allen, 11 years, accidental death | 1810 | Jenny, a black woman, 23 years, consumption |
| | William Holbertson, scirrhus liver, 57 years | | Job Lockwood, Norfield, inflammation on the brain, aged 47 year |
| 1798 | George Hinman, an infant, inflammation of the bowels | 1812 | Elnathan Seeley, aged 70, dysentery |
| | James Knapp, Plurisey, 57 years old | | Nathaniel Tredwell, aged 40, pulmonic complaint |
| | Mercy Ells, mumps, 5 months old | 1813 | Jonathan Beers, aged 54 years, epidemic |
| | Lucy Sherwood, canker, 4 years old | | Aaron Beers, aged 54 years, epidemic |
| | Anna Cascomb, in a fit, 64 years | 1814 | Aaron Burr Bradley, intemperance |
| | A child of Miles Greenfield, burned, 3 years | | Ruth, wife of Nathan Perry, Peripneumona asthma, age 56 |
| | Tabatha Waklee, burned to death, 91 years | | Eunice, daughter of Elisha Bradley, punking, age 39 |
| 1800 | Nathaniel Porter, Mortification in the bowels for a sudden cold, 13 Ephraim Nichols, mortification in the bowels from eating currants, 10 | 1815 | Widow Sarah Redfield, dropsy in chest, age 70 |
| 1801 | Lois Gilbert, 73, cancerous in arm and breast | | Widow Esther Mitchel, decay |
| 1803 | Samuel Osborn, aged 45, hemporrhage | 1816 | Amelia, wife of Lyman Hull, asthma, age 34 |
| | Samuel Baker, aged 85, cramp in the stomach | | Andrew, son of Eben. Burr Jr., diabetes, age 11 |
| | Samuel Cable, an infant, 6 months old, rickets | 1817 | John Strattan, old age and flux, age 89 |
| 1804 | James Hoty, aged 38, affection of the lungs | 1818 | Elias, black, fracture of the leg |
| | Seth Sturtes, aged 68, pneumonia | | Daughter of Prince Price, black, ulcers, age 9 months |
| | Sarah Jackson, aged 15 years, billious fever | | Priscilla, daughter of Abraham Hubbell, cholera infantum, 9 months |
| | Munson Bangs, 9 years old, colic | | Morris, son of Wakeman Wilson, convulsions, age 5 |
| | Poly Hubble, childbed sickness, aged 29 | 1820 | Sturges, son of John Banks, an idiot, age 19 |
| 1806 | Reuben Beers, aged 66, inebriation | | Lewis, son of Rowland Burr, scalded to death, age 1 |
| | Sanuel Cable, aged 73 years, felon | 1821 | Hull Murwin, effect of wound by cart wheel |
| 1808 | Samuel Brinsmade, cronicle, aged 59 | | Isaac Webb, liver inflammation, age 70 |

Aren't we lucky to be living in an age of vaccines, antibiotics, X-rays, disinfectants and all the other health aids available today!

A BERKSHIRE LAD

When winter winds in Weston
Blow Boreasly chill,
and niveous in South Norwalk,
and cold in Kellogg hill;

When the Saugatuck is frozen,
and the logs are large in grates,
When Lyons Plains lads and lasses
Fly featly on the stakes;

When mercury's at zero
and possibly more down,
call I the snowy country
to say I'll stay in Town.

Franklin P. Adams

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THE

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A PUBLICATION OF THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDED IN 1961

MARCH 1988

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WESTON

IN THIS ISSUE

THE BLIZZARD OF 1888 — IN WESTON and FAIRFIELD CTY.
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